

SOUTH ASIA DAILY BRIEFING

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On January 19, 2026, South Asia has become a central theater for the Trump administration's "Board of Peace" initiative, signaling a shift toward transactional multilateralism.

By inviting both **India** and **Pakistan** to join the Gaza oversight body, Washington is leveraging regional rivalries to secure broader Islamic and Global South legitimacy.

However, this diplomatic outreach contrasts with tightening "digital containment" strategies. **Nepal's** decision to oust Huawei from its 5G core—following prolonged pressure and investigations into procurement irregularities—reflects a growing regional consensus that technical infrastructure is inseparable from strategic autonomy.

While India assumes a mediator role on the global stage, it faces a domestic "rebalancing" as it manages U.S. tariff pressures alongside a fragile détente with China. Collectively, these moves suggest that South Asian states are no longer just subjects of great-power competition but are actively trade-offing between Western security architecture and Eastern economic integration.

Here are six important news articles shaping South Asia Today:

1. Nepal: Telecom & Geopolitics

Nepal Telecom cancels Rs5 billion billing system bid, ousts Huawei

Summary:

Nepal Telecom has officially cancelled a major billing system tender, effectively removing Chinese giant Huawei from its infrastructure. The decision, reportedly influenced by geopolitical pressure from India and the United States, marks a strategic shift as Nepal prepares for a standalone 5G network rollout.

<https://kathmandupost.com/money/2026/01/19/nepal-telecom-cancels-rs5-billion-billing-system-bid-ousts-huawei>

2. India: Global Diplomacy

India invited to sit on Trump's Board of Peace for Gaza

Summary

In a significant foreign policy development, India has been invited to join a high-level "Board of Peace" aimed at resolving the Gaza conflict. This underscores India's rising role as a global mediator and its strategic importance to the new U.S. administration's Middle East policy.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-invited-to-sit-on-trumps-board-of-peace-for-gaza/article20260119.ece>

3. Pakistan: Trade & Geoeconomics

Basmati boom propels Pakistan past Vietnam in global exports

Summary

Pakistan has overtaken Vietnam in rice export volumes following a record-breaking Basmati harvest and increased demand from Middle Eastern markets. This economic surge aligns with Islamabad's recent diplomatic push to pivot its foreign policy from a security-centric model toward proactive regional geoeconomics.

<https://asianews.network/basmati-boom-propels-pakistan-past-vietnam/>

4. Iran: Political Crisis

Trump calls for new leadership in Iran amid nationwide protests

Summary

As internal unrest in Iran escalates, U.S. President Donald Trump has publicly called for a change in Tehran's leadership. These statements, coinciding with reports of high casualties in Iranian cities, signal a hardening of U.S. foreign policy that impacts the entire South Asian security landscape.

<https://www.khaama.com/trump-calls-for-new-leadership-in-iran-amid-nationwide-protests/>

5. Afghanistan: Regional Security

Tajikistan forces kill four militants at Afghanistan border

Summary

Heightened tensions on the Afghan-Tajik border resulted in a deadly skirmish where security forces neutralized four militants crossing from Afghanistan. This incident highlights the

ongoing defense challenges in South Asia as neighboring states grapple with the export of extremism and border security.

<https://www.khaama.com/tajikistan-forces-kill-four-militants-at-afghanistan-border/>

6. Bangladesh: Telecom & Corruption

White Paper unveils 15 years of corruption in Bangladesh's telecom sector

Summary

A massive 3,272-page government white paper has exposed systemic maladministration and corruption within Bangladesh's telecommunications industry. The report details how policy missteps have hampered 5G expansion and infrastructure growth, calling for a total overhaul of the nation's digital connectivity strategy.

<https://www.weareiowa.com/article/news/local/bangladesh-telecom-sector-15-years-corruption-revealed-white-paper/>